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It was 19xx. Life was good—no, it was great. I was 19. High school was almost over. I'd found the love of my life. I was going to be studying xx at xx. My future was finally happening. After school and on the weekends, I worked at my future father-in-law's dry cleaning store on Fulton Ave in Mount Vernon, NY. I was a 19-year-old teenager working in my soon-to-be father-in-law's dry cleaning store during after school hours and on the weekends. I made some good memories there—bonding with my fiancée's dad, cramming for a test in the back room, chatting with customers. Sadly, the building was demolished in XXXX. Now, all that remains is an empty lot and the whispers of memories that grow quieter each year. Though, there are a few that yet endure.

One evening in particular stays with me. I had just closed the shop, turned off the machines, killed the lights, pulled the shutters, locked everything down. The light was fading as I made my way to the bus stop to catch the Beeline 60 that would take me back to the Bronx. Boston Rd. was quiet this time of day. For a few blocks my only companions were pigeons. I had been studying my shoes, lost in thought when I looked up and saw that the sidewalk held another—a White woman about 15 yards ahead of me walking, presumably, to the same stop.

I knew the instant she marked me. Her steps came quicker, the grip on her purse tighter. It was obvious she didn't want to let me out of her sight, because she looked over her shoulder every few seconds. I knew what was happening. Anyone with eyes would. In her mind, I was a threat. It was dark, the street mostly deserted, and I was Black.

~~Some days, I was responsible some days for closing the small store located on Fulton Ave in Mount Vernon, NY. Today, the siteside where theto dry cleaners once sat is now an empty lot. The building demolished but not the memories of being trusted to open, closed and ran the operations of the small business. Once I flicked the power switches off for the machines, lights and pulled the shutters down, I would make my way down to get on the Beeline 60 bus that runs from Westchester to the Bronx along Boston Road. One evening as I was walking towards the Bus stop briskly, I realized that a woman that appeared to be white was in front. I was trying to get to the bus stop and so was she. The night was starting to fall on that quiet section of Boston Road where the bus stop was. A foliage rich section of the stretch, it was just the two of us moving towards the bus stop. She kept looking back at me, held her purse tight and picked up her pace. At that moment, I knew exactly what the experience was about. She saw me as a threat. She obviously felt unsafe under the setting sun. DuringIn that moment, I felt guilty. Guilty for being the source of her fear, for how she felt. I desperately wanted to tell her that I was no threat to her. I wanted to tell her thThat I was a good son, a hard working student who was about to graduate high school, an emerging preacher, and a young fellow madly in love with Senikha J. Reece. I wanted her to knowsee thatme as I am a human being. It was as though I imagined could hear myself as a defense lawyer, an advocate or an apologist furiously making the case against whom I was perceived to be--a violent criminal. I was wrong. It was never my job to educate her about her deep seated biases.~~

I slowed my pace in an attempt to put more distance between her and me. Thus, she got to the bus stop early, I was late. Once there, I held back several yards. I hoped all of this would show her that I would not accost her. I stood there feeling guilty and isolated from my authentic self.

However, guilt soon gave way to anger. I was being accused of being something that I was not, a danger to this woman and society. This hurt. It also infuriated me. So lost was I to my frustration and indignation, I didn't notice the bus approaching until it blew past me. I sprinted towards the stop, the woman, and the now open doors she was disappearing behind. With a sinking feeling, I watched those doors close, passing me at a relatively high speed. Once I realized that the bus was passing I started running to get to the bus stop. I ran as fast as I could, panting towards the bus that was now at a full stop. Doors opened and that single individual lady, the only one at the bus stop mounted the steps and disappeared into the bus under the falling darkness. As I got to the door, it was already closed. I knocked on them -door- but the whiteWhite bus driver looked at me, -and then throughat his left side driver's mirror for oncoming traffic, and in an instant pulleddrove away off without me. I stood there for a moment watching the bus, listening to its roaring engines faded as my disappointment rose. in disbelief, watching the bus disappear in the fading daylight. The next one wouldn't arrive for another hour, about the time it would take me to walk home. I wanted -By now the darkness had fully enveloped the night skies. I had no choice, but to walk home. The next was set to arrive an entire hour from then which was about how long the walk home would have been. I knew I wanted to put some distance between the bus stop and the hurt I felt. After a long day at school, taking a train and bus to work, missing a bus that I should have been on, had the right to be on now I was standing there in the dark waiting for the next one to arrive. to put distance between myself and the whole painful experience so I opted not to wait and began the long trek back to the Bronx.

That experience is now more than twenty five years behind me, and yet iThat experience -is always with me. The feelings of frustration and sadness still linger twenty five years later Even as I write about it now, I am reliving the sadness of how I was seen by this complete stranger. The memories and of victimization isare always always housed in the mind and body of the victim, -never the victimizer. And yes, I am still mad withat myself for:

- giving Making way for her to feel comfortable priority at my expenseover my need,
- haHaving the-a mental conversation to prove convince to her that I am not a threat, to her
- miMissing the bus after a long day of school and work,
- fFeeling guilty for something that so I had nothing to do withabsurd,
- alAllowing the experience to inspire suffering a quarter century later,
- hoHousing the memories of that day in my body,

After H got home later that night, and ate dinner, I took a shower and in an attempt -tried- to cleanse my mind and body of that night. Sleep was slow to claim me as I tossed and turned, trying unsuccessfully to I went to sleep and tried to push the experience outfrom -of my mind. I. -Needless to say that, I have been successful at neither hiding nor forgetting that experience. I woke up the next morning hoping that it was just a terrible dream. It wasn't a dream. It was the beginning of

my journey into the recurring nightmare of what it means to be blackBlack, male, and an immigrant in the United States. ~~That night has not left me. It is always with me. T~~

This sense of disempowerment is felt by blackBlack and Brown men in the United States ~~in every nook and cranny of society~~ on a daily basis. We have ~~learned to adapt by~~ developed survival mechanisms in the form of stepping back to make bigots comfortable. We have bowed our heads low ~~— and~~ sometimes so low our necks and backs ache ~~—~~ just to prove that we are harmless, nonaggressive, and humble ~~—~~ in the presence of whiteWhiteness. Chester Pierce, the renowned Harvard scholar and psychiatrist, would call this horrifying experience at the bus stop “microaggression”: The term (however inadequate) describes the relentless slights, shaming, covert messages that Black and Brown people experience encounter in our daily interactions with White America. These messages communicate in clear and consistent ways that we are perceived as less than, not good enough, dangerous, subhuman and are undeserving of equal rights and equal treatments under the law.

It's telling the Mexican American that he speaks English well “for a Mexican.”

It's telling the blackBlack father thatwho is rushing from work to take his daughters to swimming lessons that his behavior is unusual for men in “this community.” It was what I experienced that evening at the bus stop watching a White woman ~~— Purse clenched tightly and pace quickened~~ scurrying down the sidewalk terrified that, at any moment, all out of an unfounded fear that has been ingrained in her all her life to believe that I would along with our grandfathers, fathers, brothers and sons are dangerous, accost her. No It's no wonder why Ibram X. Kendi said that he detests the term “microaggression,” ~~on the basis that~~ T there is nothing “micro” about the daily abuse that one group of people suffers and at the hand of another. There was nothing “micro” about my experience that evening. And h How do I know that? Because again, after twenty five years the memory still stings in ways that I do not always completely understand. That It was not a minor slight or inadvertent infraction. Instead, it It was a direct assault on my personhood. Phillip D. Johnson in his article “Counseling African American Men: A Contextualized Humanistic Perspective,” Phillip D. Johnson notes, “Historically, the humanity of African American men has been attacked in a cruel and vicious manner. They have been placed outside the human family and often described as beasts or monkeys.”¹ — One would think that such heinous language is a relic of the past. It's not. Dr Michelle Herren, a pediatre pediatric anaesthesiologist anesthesiologist out of Denver medical community responded to a post about Michelle Obama’s eloquence. Her response to the post was, “Doesn’t seem to be speaking too eloquent here, thank god we can’t hear her.” — In the same post, she would go on say this about the then First Lady of the United States, an accomplished jurist in her own right, “Monkey face and poor ebonic English!!! — There I feel better and I am still not a racist!!! Just calling it like it is.”

~~Suggest: discussing how “micro aggression” can and has devolved to macro aggression. Microaggressive behaviors don’t happen in a vacuum.~~

White America knows which buzz words ~~to use to~~ will mobilize ~~rapid~~ law enforcement response into converging on the blackBlack and Brown male with brute and far too often deadly force. Consider the recent incident in Central Park NYC between Amy Cooper, a W white woman walking her dog without a leash, and Chris Cooper (no relations), a blackBlack man thatwho was ~~on~~ bird watching in the same park. Chris Cooper asked her to put the dog on the leash (which is

neither understand. For the person ~~that~~who claims color blindness could not imagine the risk we felt of being anxious in such a space. [The risk of being perceived in derogatory terms or possibly being told or treated like we don't belong there. Elijah Anderson was spot on when he said, [when ~~black~~Black folks enter whiteWhite spaces we are always assessing, always looking for kindred spirits. We are always looking for who else is here that is ~~black~~Black. The comfort we feel seeing a few ~~black~~Black folks in the audience, at the conference, at the table where decisions are being made. The same is often true for when women enter male dominated spaces. We want to know that we are not alone in our experiences or presence in the whiteWhite space. We experience a deep comfort in being able to look across the other table in the whiteWhite space, make eye contact, and send a swift but subtle smile of solidarity in the whiteWhite space that says, "we see each other" in the whiteWhite.

SomeYou ~~may~~might ~~ask~~ if "If you are that uncomfortable in "the whiteWhite space" then why even enter it?" I would ask you ~~Well,~~justto imagine how difficult it would be to avoiding all such spaces. A Black college student would have a difficult time attending class if he was avoiding White spaces. He would likely would have to ~~To do that many students would~~ drop out of school, But then again that's exactly what they do (Sadly, that's exactly what many do.) Black ~~If we should avoid such spaces, then we~~ businessmen ~~boycotting White spaces wouldn't~~ would ~~sho~~ need to turn their backs on ~~w~~ up to ~~corporate~~ americaAmerica. Moviegoers would have a woefully short list of movies from which to choose. The Black woman in labor would have her child at home. You get the idea. The White Space is ubiquitous and unavoidable.

~~to watch most movies made even today.~~ So why do we show up? We show up because we have learned to survive in such spaces. There's this running dialogue we engage in with ourselves, a self pep talk of sorts that goes something like this:

(I cannot give an example of just what a conversation like this would look like. But I think it's a good way to draw as clear a picture as you can of the sorts of silent encouragement you're talking about.)

The country club event ~~We engage in all sorts of mental aerobics in assuring ourselves why it's important to not only be present, but to bring our A game when we do show up knowing that whether we succeed or fail in any such space, final judgement is often based on our black maleness.~~ Mymy wife and I attended ~~was the very definition of a White space. Nevertheless, it was an enjoyable affairs~~ at this exclusive event enjoying the festivities. The spread was extravagant. ~~I ate some horderves and decided to return to~~ There were many serving stations filled with innumerablecountless ~~cheeses,~~ crackers, olives, grapes, chicken wings and so much more. As I got up from the high chair, I asked my wife if she would like seconds to which she said yes. At I was at the first serving station. I stood back pondering what ~~delicatessen~~ tasty morsel I should begin with. Out of nowhere, a Wwhite woman came up to appeared me, an empty plate in her hands, ~~and attempted to do two things. She~~ As she attempted to hand me her garbage, she said, "Can ~~tried to pass off her used plates in my hand while making a request of me. She said, "can~~ you take these plates and bring me another glass of wine?" Immediately And just like that, ~~the~~ risk I knew ~~that~~ I know ~~existed in entering such a space~~ became more than a risk ~~It was now~~ a reality.

Jolted by ~~her~~ the woman's blatant lack of color blindness ~~claimed by so many,~~ with a tinge of annoyance, I simply said to her, with a tinge of annoyance, "I do not work here." She The look she